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EL GRECO



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FRANK GRAY GREGGOLD



WHITELY PRINTED

1889



EL GRECO

FRANK GRAY GRISWOLD

F. Gray Griswold.



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FOREWORD

Señor Manuel B. Cossio's Appreciation of

EL GRECO

He was a stranger, a Cretan, who had pastured in Italy, thoroughly alive, faithful to the traditions of the painting of his native land, following a straight furrow into which he was sowing good seed. He was the greatest, the most human, and for those reasons the most noble of all our Spanish painters. He was filled with the sadness of his heroes at the same moment that Cervantes (1547-1616) was creating the story of that most noble *Caballero de la triste figura*—Don Quixote.

PORTRAITS

- I. Stephanus, about 1571. Vienna Gallery.
- II. Clovio, 1571-1576. Naples Gallery.
- III. Vincenzo Anastagi, 1571-1576. Frick Collection, New York.
- IV. Lady in Ermine, 1571-1576. Sir John Stirling Maxwell, Scotland.
- V. Pompeo Leoni, 1576-1582. Mr. A. Stirling Maxwell, Scotland.
- VI. Caballero with Hand on Breast, 1577-1584. Prado.
- VII. A Doctor, 1577-1584. Prado.
- VIII. De la Casa de Leiva, 1577-1584. Sir W. Van Horne, Montreal.
- IX. Unknown Caballero, 1584-1594. Prado.
- X. The Family, 1586.
- XI. Duque de Benavente, 1590-1600. Bayonne Gallery.
- XII. Cardinal Guevara, 1590-1600. Havemeyer Collection, New York.
- XIII. Unknown Caballero, 1584-1594. Prado.
- XIV. A Poet, 1560-1600. Leningrad.
- XV. Rodrigo Vasquez, 1594-1604. Prado.

- XVI. Don Diego de Covarrubias, 1594-1604.
Toledo.
- XVII. Antonio de Covarrubias, 1594-1604.
Toledo.
- XVIII. El Greco, 1594-1604. de Bereute, Madrid.
- XIX. The Lady with the Flower, 1594-1604.
A. Stirling Maxwell, Scotland.
- XX. Unknown Lady, 1594-1604. Toledo.
- XXI. Cardinal Guevara, 1594-1604. Paris.
- XXII. Cardinal Quiroga, 1594-1604. Madrid.
- XXIII. Julian Romero, 1594-1604. Paris.
- XXIV. Juan de Avila, 1594-1604. Toledo.
- XXV. Unknown Caballero, 1604-1614. Prado.
- XXVI. Unknown Caballero, 1604-1614. Prado.
- XXVII. Unknown Caballero, 1604-1614. Prado.
- XXVIII. Unknown Caballero, 1604-1614. Prado.
- XXIX. A Painter, 1604-1614. Seville.
- XXX. San Ignacio de Loyola, 1604-1614. Paris.
- XXXI. Bracamonte, 1604-1614. Avila.
- XXXII. A Friar, 1604-1614. Madrid.
- XXXIII. Friar Hortensio Paravicino, 1604-1614.
Madrid.
- XXXIV. Friar Hortensio Paravicino, 1604-1614,
Boston Museum of the Fine Arts.

- XXXV. A Friar, 1604-1614. Madrid.
- XXXVI. Antonio Covarrubias, 1604-1614. Toledo.
- XXXVII. Don Diego Covarrubias, 1604-1614.
Toledo.
- XXXVIII. Don Diego Covarrubias, 1604-1614.
Bucharest.
- XXXIX. Cardinal Tavera, 1604-1614. Toledo.

EL GRECO



THIS device is the lily-hilted sword of St. James. It is the emblem of the Knights of Santiago de Compostela, an order founded in the 10th century for the purpose of defending the true faith against the Moors who first invaded Spain in 711 A. D. It was embroidered on the mantles of the knights of old, and later on their doublets. It appears in the self-painted portrait of Velázquez in *Las Meninas*, and also in El Greco's *El Entierro*. See page 42.



EL GRECO



AM not an art critic nor do I pretend to be a connoisseur of art. This book is simply an appreciation of my friend, El Greco. I say friend for I have cultivated his acquaintance since I was introduced to him in Spain in 1900. At that time he was little known and was not greatly appreciated outside of his adopted land.

We had a few of his pictures to enjoy in London, Paris, and Vienna, but one cannot know him without going to Spain. It was there that I became enchanted with his paintings, and since then I have never lost an opportunity to gain what information I could concerning this elusive and very great artist.

I have read all that I could find that has been written about him in four languages, and have studied Spanish for the sole purpose of reading Cossio's great book.

Cossio is a true historian who tells only what he really knows and can prove, but there are others who have invented fairy tales as to what El Greco did or should not have done.

Few facts are known about this great artist, so that his supposed life can be traced only by the works of art he has left behind him; these tell of his early endeavors and the progress he made as a painter, sculptor and architect.

He was practically unknown outside of Spain until in late years, for many of his paintings had been attributed to others, so that until they had been examined by the experts of modern times he had the credit of having painted but few pictures. Owing to his versatility his works had long been assigned to several different artists of the XVI century. But he signed many of his pictures, and on examination his name which had been overlooked was often found. In the so-called *Palladio* portrait it was discovered below the edge of the frame. In others his strange markings were found in odd places.

In the early part of this century experts journeyed to Spain in order to study El Greco and they were more than astonished by what they found.

In 1908 the great book "El Greco" by Manuel B. Cossio appeared, but could be read only by those who knew Spanish. A little later "Die Spanische Reise" by Julius Meier-Graefe was written. He claims to have discovered El Greco, is most enthusiastic about his pictures, and even derides the ability of Velásquez so as to glorify the Greek artist. It is a most interesting work, although one cannot fully agree with the deductions of the author. It has lately been translated into English as "The Spanish Journey" and is well worth reading.

Many other works have been written on the same subject, the most interesting of which is the monumental production of the Danish expert J. F. Willumsen, which has been admirably translated into flowing French by J. J. Gateau and others, and is called "La Jeunesse du Peintre El Greco." It is beautifully illustrated and worthy of deep study. The author attempts to follow the early life of the painter by his pictures, and describes what, in his mind, caused El Greco to change his method of painting from time to time, what artists influenced his progress, and the reason why his pictures had so often been attributed to the genius of others. He takes you on a journey through the art of

the XVI century that is fascinating to follow, and his deductions seem most plausible to me, an amateur.

Cossio tabulates 456 pictures that he knows of and believes were painted by El Greco. It is not my purpose nor would it be in my power to describe them. The most important ones have been fully noted and judged by the mighty. What I desire to do, as an amateur, is to draw the attention of those who are as ignorant as I was to the great portraits painted by the Greek master.



II.



Artists from Velásquez to Sargent have studied El Greco and profited thereby. The former would probably never have painted *Las Lanzas* had he not had the inspiration of El Greco's *El Espolio*, yet how different these great pictures are. El Greco created the impression of a crowd by properly placing a few figures, while Velásquez employs a multitude for the same purpose. *El Espolio* appears as if seen by a sudden flashlight at just the proper moment, while *Las Lanzas* has the studied effect of a still movie that had been rehearsed many times. Is there any picture of the XVI





century that has more glorious color than *El Espolio*?

Sargent visited Spain, and gained much by his study of Spanish art and was fortunate enough to unearth several works by El Greco in the cellar of the Prado. These pictures were in a lamentable condition but have since been renovated.

One often hears the remark: "Yes, El Greco painted some wonderful pictures yet one cannot admire the grotesque, elongated horrors that came from his brush." There are many such small pictures, but did he ever see them? I doubt it. His art was a cult in Spain during his Toledo period, and has been ever since among Spanish artists. Spain has produced many poor artists and they have been endeavoring to copy El Greco's methods for three hundred years.

When he died he left a son, a very poor painter, and numerous helpers and pupils, the best of whom was Tristán. They no doubt produced many so-called El Greco paintings in attempting to carry on the tradition.

It may be possible that El Greco was astigmatic and that this infirmity increased as he grew older. Counter-acting lenses were invented about 70 years ago, so that the painter could not have profited by them. It is

quite possible that late in life he painted as he saw but not as the normal eye sees. All artists have mannerisms and his, no doubt, were more pronounced than is usual.

Probably some of these adversely criticised paintings, if they are by him, were studio sketches, painted in a great hurry for the purpose of the study of light or color, which he never expected the world would see.

You can follow the history of the world from the time of the Egyptians until the present day by studying the pictures that have been painted during the different periods of civilization. The paintings in the tombs and the carvings on the monuments tell the history of the customs of the Egyptians, how they dressed, fought, hunted, and lived. The wall paintings in Pompeii describe the customs and morals of that city in 79 A.D. The story is continued in the pictures and sculpture of the Middle Ages and down to the present day. It is a much truer history than the written word. One can always trust what one sees better than what one hears or what has been written. The presumptions of historians are handed down from generation to generation until they are believed to be truths. Historians copy as facts what their predecessors have assumed, and

history becomes strewn with untruths and inaccuracies.

The marble bust of Caesar gives one a better insight into his character than the hundreds of books that have been written about him, and you are inclined to forgive the man who allowed Rome to burn when you gaze upon the baby Nero in Florence.

The latest historian, Ludwig, in order to sell his book, recites imaginary conversations of Napoleon. We know that the great man never thought these things, much less spoke them, yet they may be considered authentic at some future time.



III.



The first half of the XVI century was a glorious period in Italian art and the human form was considered divine. Corregio (1494-1534) painted pictures of Venus and of Leda as well as of angels. Titian (1477-1576) glorified the human body in his pictures of Venus and in Sacred and Profane Love. The saints of Paul Veronese were beautiful fair-haired Venetian women arrayed in splendid brocades. Raphael placed

normal people in his religious pictures clad in beautiful colored raiment.

You have but to study these pictures to appreciate what a sumptuous generation it was. There was little fear of God or the devil, and luxury and art flourished. Life was short and gay, yet the artists seem to have been exceptions for many of them lived long in years. Michelangelo lived to be 89 and Titian was 99 when he died.

If El Greco (1537-1614) had been born fifty years earlier he probably would have told the same story. It is true that his early pictures were of the Venetian school, but later he was forced by circumstances to change his subjects and his manner of painting.

The reaction in the world started in Spain, and as Italy was under the political domination of Spain at that time, it was soon felt there. Sainte Thérèse was having her visions about 1560, Loyola was teaching his doctrines and founding the Jesuits and Philip II (1527-1598) when not praying on his knees was writing at his desk. Pius V became Pope in 1566. He was a Dominican friar who had been closely related to the horrors of the Inquisition and was not in the least like the easy-going Julius II and Leo X, who had been

great patrons of art. He worked entirely for the Church and led an austere life. The Church was in danger, Martin Luther (1483-1546) had appeared and the Reformation was under way. Titian was old but Veronese was painting his large pictures of feasts.

The human form became anathema because its contemplation encouraged the sins of the flesh. Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, which had been so much admired, were now considered indecent and the beautiful nude figures were later covered with drapery.

A picture now must not appeal to the senses but must elevate the soul. This was at first very difficult for El Greco, and when he arrived in Spain he found he could not please Philip II because his pictures were too earthly. What the king desired was *extase*. No picture appealed to him unless it inspired him to kneel down and pray. It was a period of intolerance and sackcloth and ashes. This continued for long years in Spain. It accounts for the paintings of Velásquez being often somber in color. What is probably his greatest picture—*Los Borachos*—is a study in browns. Bright colors were considered immoral. Ribera (1588-1656) and Zurbaran (1598-1662) painted in brown and black,

and it accounts for the woe-begone, emaciated saints and suffering humanity clad in brown as portrayed in the paintings of those days. It was a sad mystical time both in the world and in the world of art.

Artists in those days received orders from their patrons for pictures to be placed in churches and monasteries and were not only given the subject to be painted but also the dimension and shape of the canvas desired, for it had to fit a certain wall space. This is partly the reason for the elongated saints painted by El Greco in his later period. He was given long and narrow strips to fill with more than life size figures. In order to obtain the best effect he was obliged to elongate his subjects.



IV.



Properly to understand the pictures El Greco painted during the latter half of his life we must consider the conditions under which he worked. In the first place he lived in Toledo.

Toledo occupies a rugged promontory of granite, and the deep gorge of the river Tagus lies below the city. From a distance the town has the aspect of a vast





fortress that is dominated by the towers of the great cathedral. The streets are very narrow and there are few *plazas*. The houses are massive and somber with great iron-studded doorways leading into *patios*. It is a Gothic and medieval city which has always been the centre of Spanish Christianity and the seat of an archbishop who is the "primate of all the Spains." It is so silent and sad a city that even the doleful Philip II could not live there, for he moved the capital to Madrid in 1560.

It was in this city, with priests and monks at every step and the clergy for his chief patrons, that El Greco passed the latter half of his life.

The Pope, a fanatical horseman, was in the saddle and the world was priest ridden. El Greco had to earn his daily bread with his brush and was obliged to paint the subjects that were demanded.

Under these conditions it is not to be wondered at that he painted pictures full of mysticism and that he has since been considered a mystic by all his critics.

I find however that he had the *joie de vivre*, for it is known he had a charming mistress and went to the trouble and expense of having musicians come to him from Venice for the purpose of entertaining his friends

and himself while they dined. He also had a sense of humor for Pacheco, the father-in-law of Velásquez, relates that when he visited him in his old age, he asked him which was of more value, design or color. The answer was color. "But," said Pacheco, "Michelangelo."—"Oh, well," replied El Greco, "Michelangelo was an admirable man, but he had no idea of painting." Pacheco missed seeing the twinkle in El Greco's eye.

There are other reasons why he was not a mystic at heart. One is that he was a great colorist and mystics do not fancy bright colors. He was not a colorist of the Venetian school of suffused color, not like Tintoretto who was sparing of bright colors, but he was a colorist of his own school of vivid colors. It has taken the painters who have followed him three hundred years to acquire what he did with such ease and success.

He was a Greek with the Byzantine sense of color, for color is indigenous in the East and is the essence of Oriental life.

He beautified his pictures with blues, reds, greens, and yellows as well as with pink and grey.

This artist was a creature of environment and was obliged to change the colors on his palette as some

birds change their plumage according to season and to landscape, and for the same reason—self-protection. El Greco was a lone Greek in a foreign land and his religion was probably far from the religion of the Spain of his day. He was very intellectual, for we know that he had the classics in his library and that he studied architecture and was an accomplished architect as well as a sculptor in both wood and stone. He probably had a religion that intellect could grasp.

The religion of Spain was a brutal religion, a religion that burned a man at the stake if he failed to follow the canons of the Church, and El Greco was obliged to pretend to save his soul in order to save his life.

That El Greco painted pictures late in life which were full of mysticism is quite true, but I believe he was forced to do so by circumstance. I can see him painting an elongated, emaciated saint and laughing in his sleeve as he accomplished it.

You have but to look at the portraits he painted to see how human he was. He placed portraits of living men in most of his large pictures. There are over twenty-five in *El Entierro*, and he painted his own portrait in five of his pictures, not including the supposed portrait of himself.

El Greco was a paradox among painters for, as I have said, he was born fifty years too late yet he lived three hundred years too early, for he was a great colorist and the first of the impressionist painters. He was fond of life, and history calls him a mystic. Many people claim he was mad, which he would have been could he have seen some of the pictures attributed to him by which his sanity is judged.



V.



It is possible to follow the artistic career of El Greco by the study of the pictures he painted during the different periods of his life, and also to understand not only why he changed his method of painting from time to time, but also the reason which was responsible for the selection of some of the subjects he was inspired to portray.

The word *Kres*—Cretan, appears on several of El Greco's early pictures, so we know he was born on the Island of Crete, probably at Candia in 1537, though the date is uncertain.

His real name was Doménicos Theotokópoulos but

he was also known as Theotokópouli, Doménico Greco, Il Greco, and finally El Greco.

There are frescoes in Crete that date from the XII to the XVI century. There are also many icons to be found of early date so that it is evident that Byzantine art flourished there in early times.

Like most of the great artists of Italy El Greco began his artistic studies at an early age and it is probable that he became an apprentice to some Greek artist or artist-monk when quite young. There is no doubt that he acquired a good education at that time for we know how charmingly he painted the tiny Greek script later on.

His first work as a painter was probably copying icons. It is a rigid form of painting with little or no perspective, yet with a subtle system of producing the effect of depth. In this work he acquired a technique which never failed him in after life.

It was the form of painting that had been approved by the early Church and most beautifully expressed in mosaics.

The West has never understood mosaics, for it uses them for decorating flat spaces in connection with stone. In San Marco the mosaics are part and parcel

of the structure as they should be. The upper part of the building is composed of curves without any flat expanse, sharp edges, or right angles, just flowing curves. The edges are blunt and all angles rounded, while the surfaces are uneven and slightly undulating. The material is unbroken by stone. It is the same in the Palatina in Palermo. The beauty of the dome and the vaults in San Marco is derived from the mosaics. The Eastern mosaic theory is an architectural motive, not simply a decoration.

It is probable that El Greco left his native town about 1560 when twenty-three years of age. He had seen pictures by Bellini in Candia and had become aware that there was much for him to learn.

At the time of his arrival in Venice her glory had begun to fade. America had been discovered in 1492 and the sea route to India had been found. Commerce was no longer confined to the Mediterranean and the East, and Portugal, Spain and England were becoming world traders.

Venice has changed but little since 1550. The city has faded, buildings have crumbled and have been replaced, but the city has not increased in size or in population.

El Greco no doubt felt at home in San Marco yet he arrived at an evil moment, for many of the Byzantine mosaics were being removed to be replaced by others after drawings by Titian and Tintoretto.

Venice was on the fringe of the East and looked toward the Eastern Empire; she disliked the West and its barbarians. Her art had been Oriental until it became tinged with a Western spirit. San Marco was her color inspiration, and it was Venice that taught the world what color was.

But the young artist had other things to study, and what interested him most was the Venetian school of painting. At that date Titian was eighty-three but Tintoretto was only forty-two and Veronese only thirty-two years of age.

There was a Greek quarter in Venice in those days where about 4000 Greeks lived. The "Rio dei Greci" still exists today as does the Greek church of San Giorgio with its leaning campanile. El Greco probably felt at home among his countrymen for he spoke but little Italian at that time.

He no doubt attempted to find employment but Byzantine painters were not in demand. We know, however, that he and Schiavone, the artist, became

friends, and that he learned much by watching his Italian friend at work.

There had no doubt been many Greek artists in Italy from time to time, but I know of but one great picture by a Greek.

There is a small church in Venice which at one time was surrounded by vineyards. It is named San Francesco de la Vigna, the *façade* is by Palladio, and the interior was restored by Sansovino. In this church there is a beautiful enthroned Madonna by Fra Antonio de Negroponte painted about 1450. It is of great beauty and it is the only work known by this artist.

During this period of domicile in Venice the youthful El Greco painted his first five pictures:

1. *A Dominican Saint*, Willumsen Collection.
2. *The Miracle of Pentecost*, Willumsen Collection.
3. *A drawing of Christ supported by angels*, Willumsen Collection.
4. *A miniature of a Cretan woman*, Willumsen Collection.
5. *A portrait of a young Cretan woman*, Stirling Maxwell.



VI.



What we know next of El Greco is that he is hard at work in the studio of Jacopo Da Ponte who was known as Bassano (1510-1592) and who lived in the town of that name which lies on the Brenta some 60 kilometres northwest of Venice. How he came to find employment there is not known, but it is probable that he met Bassano at the studio of Schiavone, for Tintoretto, Veronese, Schiavone and Bassano were firm friends.

In those days Bassano had a great reputation as an artist and was flooded with orders. He needed help and chose El Greco for that purpose. Bassano is said to have been a very genial man, totally without vanity and a most industrious worker. He painted many large and small pictures and also many frescoes during his long life of 82 years.

It is probable that El Greco worked for Bassano from 1560-1570—ten years as a workman without any artistic acknowledgment, for his name does not appear with that of Bassano on any known picture.

When Bassano's son succeeded El Greco as his father's helper we find Francesco's name on a picture in conjunction with that of Bassano the father.

In order to assist Bassano El Greco was obliged to adapt his methods to those of his master and to learn to paint in the Bassano manner. In this way he became thoroughly grounded in the Venetian school of painting.

If a student takes the trouble to study the numerous paintings by Bassano he will find that this painter had three different manners of painting.

During his first period, about 1550 to 1562, the figures he painted, as well as the animals he portrayed, were thickset and squat in type, there was a lack of perspective, and his colors were dark.

From about 1562 to 1572 his work gradually changed. The figures became more true to life, more elongated, and much more graceful, the perspective improved in a marked degree, and the colors became much warmer and more brilliant.

If you scrutinize the pictures of this, the greatest period of Bassano, you will find the unmistakable touch of a foreign hand.

This hand was undoubtedly El Greco's, yet what part of these pictures he drew or painted is difficult to judge, for he was always apparently trying to follow Bassano's manner. The success and superior beauty of



In order to assist him, he was obliged to adapt his method of teaching. He learned to paint in the Italian manner, and he became thoroughly grounded in the art of painting.

If a student took the trouble to study the famous paintings by Bassano, he would find that he had three different manners of painting.

During his first period, about 1540, the figures he painted, as well as the animals he portrayed, were thickset and squat in type, there was a lack of perspective, and his colors were dark.

From about 1550 to 1572 his work gradually changed. The figures became more true to life, more elongated, and more graceful, and the perspective improved. A marked difference was found between the earlier and more brilliant work.

If you saw a picture of a man, you would find it hard at Bassano's. The man would seem to be of a foreign race.

Evening in the Venetian Lagoon is difficult to describe. It was apparently trying to follow Bassano's. The success and superior beauty of



these pictures is undoubted, but after 1572 Bassano slipped back into his first or pre-El Greco style, losing the technique and the color which he had displayed with such success during his second and brilliant period.

El Greco probably left Bassano about 1570 owing doubtless to the fact that the master had three sons who were budding artists and quite sufficient help in that busy studio. These three sons continued the Bassano tradition for long years after the death of the father.

El Greco learned much during those ten years and found time to paint pictures outside of the studio in his own style.

There are eight pictures in existence that he is supposed to have painted during those busy years:

1. *Portrait of a man called Stephanus*, Hof Gallery, Vienna.
2. *Christ Curing the Blind*, Royal Gallery, Dresden.
3. *The Baptism of Christ*, Cook Collection, England.
4. *Christ in the Temple*, Cook Collection, England.
5. *Christ Curing the Blind*, Don Valle, Madrid.
6. *The Abduction of Proserpine*, Doria Gallery, Rome.

7. *St. Francis Receiving the Stigmata*, Paris.

8. *Boy Blowing on Embers*, Nat. Museum, Naples.

There is little of Bassano in these pictures but some of them remind one of the artist's early Byzantine education, chiefly in the grouping of the figures. He borrows figures from Bassano's pictures but perhaps the originals had been drawn and may be also painted by El Greco's hand.



VII.



During this his second residence in Venice El Greco is supposed to have obtained work in the studio of Titian. The foundation for this belief is that some critics think it was he who painted the hand of Titian's portrait of Filippo Strozzi. There is also a letter, which was found in the Vatican Library, written by Clovio, the miniaturist, to Cardinal Allesandro Farnese recommending a young Cretan painter as a "student of Titian." What the word student means in this case is doubtful, for there is every reason to believe that El Greco thoroughly studied the works of Titian and profited much thereby in style, yet he may also have

worked in the studio. It was perhaps from Titian that he acquired the habit of inserting portraits into his pictures.

El Greco is supposed to have painted two pictures during this visit in Venice: *The Adoration of the Shepherds* and a supposed portrait of *Palladio*, both of which are in Copenhagen.

Titian was now old and must have had helpers for he kept on producing pictures. Perhaps El Greco gave him aid. If he did it was only for a short period for we hear that he left for Rome in 1570.

How he journeyed is not known but most likely via Ferrara, Bologna, and Florence. Travel by road was no small undertaking in those days as the highways were infested by brigands. Voyagers assembled in towns until, owing to sufficient numbers, they could proceed and protect themselves and their goods.

Our friend no doubt remained some time in Florence for there was much to see and to learn. He found that the Florentine painters had subordinated color to form which was the opposite of what Venice had taught him.

Benvenuto Cellini and the painter Bronzino were still living,

After leaving Florence he may have stopped at Spoleto in order to see the frescoes by Filippo Lippi.

El Greco found the conditions in Rome quite different from those he had left in Venice. Instead of fair ladies in silks and brocades, he found the streets full of priests, and solemn processions of the Church in place of the gay masquerades of the Piazza San Marco.

Did he like the change? If he had he probably would have remained there instead of going so soon to Spain.

Clovio's letter to the Cardinal was of great benefit to our friend for we find him living at the Palazzo Farnese where Clovio also resided.

Cardinal Farnese was a great patron of art and owned a wonderful collection which is now distributed throughout Italy.

He bought three of El Greco's paintings:

The Portrait of Clovio

Boy Blowing on Embers

Christ Healing the Blind

The two former are now in the Naples Museum and the last is in Parma.

The Cardinal was a great person in many ways for he had Vignola build for him the Villa Caprarola with



After leaving Florence he had stopped at Spoleto in order to see the tomb of Giotto Lippi.

El Greco found the costumes of the people different from those he had left in Toledo. Instead of four ladies in blue and brocades he found a crowd full of poverty, and solemn processions of the suffering, some of the masquerades of the Piazza San Marco.

How like the change? If he had been born in Spain he would have remained there instead of going across the Straits.

El Greco's letter to the Cardinal was of great benefit to our friend for we find him living at the Palazzo Farnese where Claret also resided.

El Greco's letter was a great piece of art and a great piece of literature which was a great piece of art and a great piece of literature.

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its wonderful gardens, and with the Farnese Gardens he beautified Rome.

El Greco had a studio in Rome and apparently was his own master for the first time. It was then that he studied architecture and sculpture and became proficient in both.

Michelangelo had died in 1564. Clovio and Vasari were the only artists of renown now left in Rome.

Girolamo da Fano had been employed by Pius V to drape some of the figures of the Michelangelo frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. This sacrilege was pursued further by order of Clement XIII as late as 1760.

Gossip relates that Rome was greatly shocked by a remark that El Greco is said to have made. He is reported to have said that if they would destroy all the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel he would be pleased to repaint them in just as beautiful a manner but more chaste in feeling.

This is supposed to have been the cause of El Greco's departure from Rome. Michelangelo was considered to be a god and Rome could not countenance anyone who made such a statement.

Personally I do not believe the story for one moment, for, although we know by the remarks he made

in Court at Toledo some years later that El Greco had an exalted opinion of his powers, and that he was a brave man, yet we also know that he was not a foolish man, and that remark was foolish.

It is possible that he did not admire Michelangelo's colors but his artistic eye could not have failed to admire the form and the wonderful drawing of the master. Then why go to Spain for that reason? Why not return to Venice?

What in my opinion induced him to go to Spain was the common report of the great doings of Philip II. Spain appeared as an Eldorado for a young and ambitious painter.

Philip II had laid the foundations of the Escorial in 1563 and had written to his Ambassador in Rome to send him all the talent that he could for the purpose of embellishing the great structure.

There is no doubt that El Greco found the conditions in the Eternal City very dismal and saw little chance for employment. There appeared to be great possibilities in Spain.

Titian had been bidden to journey there but had refused on account of age. He sent a pupil who, as El Mudo, became painter to the King. Titian also sent

several paintings which are still to be found in the Escorial hanging near El Greco's great painting of San Mauricio.

El Greco left Rome for Spain in the spring of 1572 after a residence of one and a half years.



VIII.



It was a great undertaking to travel from Rome to Madrid in 1572, and a costly one. El Greco must have saved his earnings during the ten years he was working for Bassano to be able to embark on such a venture.

It took a courier one month to carry the news of the battle of Lepanto to Philip II in Spain, and he probably journeyed by the quickest possible route.

It is unlikely that El Greco traveled by land. In the first place, it was too costly, and in the second place we know that he took a number of pictures with him, as well as numerous engravings and sketches of Italian pictures, for he reproduced many figures from them later in Spain.

A direct sea route from Civita Vecchia was open to him, but that was dangerous for the Mediterranean was alive with both Turkish and Barbary pirates.

He probably sailed along the coast to Genoa, from there to Marseilles, and thence to Barcelona. He then must have journeyed by land to Madrid and to the Escorial.

Spain was in her glory at that time, but the gold and silver which had been flowing into the country from Peru and Mexico had begun to demoralize the country and its inhabitants. The first false step Spain made was when the Inquisition banished all the Jews in 1492; and when in 1609 the Moriscoes, the backbone of the country, were ordered to depart within three days, her downfall was assured. The resources of Spain never recovered from this terrible blow.

The Moors had introduced the cultivation of sugar, rice, cotton, and silk, and had established a system of irrigation which gave fertility to the soil. The Province of Valencia had become a model of agriculture for the rest of Europe.

The Moors had shown superiority both in manufacture and in commerce, for the Christian inhabitants were haughty and indolent, and had left all degrading employment to their so-called inferiors. All these advantages were sacrificed in an insane desire to please the Church.

The large supply of precious metal made gold and silver cheaper than elsewhere, and all other commodities much more expensive. Spanish gold left the country and enriched France and other lands.

In the beginning of the XVI century Spain had a population of over ten millions; in the following century the population fell to six millions. Her industries died away, her irrigation canals dried up, and the districts that had been highly cultivated by the Moors became deserts and have so remained to this day.

Charles V, Roman Emperor and King of Spain, abdicated in 1556, and his son Philip II became king.

Unlike his father, he considered that the pen was mightier than the sword. He was a self-righteous man, capable of endless toil, and he believed that he had great judgment in all things, but he was very slow in making up his mind.

He was very pious, and had a cell from which he could see Mass in the Escorial church, but he was very loose with women. He married four times yet lived in adultery with Doña Maria de Osoria for many long years, or so they must have seemed to her.

This was the man with whom El Greco had to deal when he arrived in Spain.

Madrid was a dull little town of 30,000 inhabitants and the streets were full of lackeys. The gentry were all dressed in black with large white ruffs around their throats. The royal palace and the Court were there, but the town was very dull.

The Escorial was but 45 kilometres distant, and it is probable that there El Greco passed the greater part of his first four years in Spain. He worked for his friend Herrera, designing altar screens and probably paintings which he was not allowed to execute, for Tibaldo, a very mediocre painter, had the commission from the king.

He spoke very little Spanish but most of the artists at work at the monastery were Italians or had studied in Italy.

Although the king does not seem to have appreciated El Greco, the architect Herrera appears to have had a high regard for his talents.

There are seven pictures which it is believed were painted by El Greco during those four years.

1. *The Martyrdom of St. Sebastián*, Palencia.
2. *Pietà*, Huntington Collection.
3. *Don Diego Covarrubias*, Toledo.
4. *Pompeo Leoni*, Stirling Maxwell, Scotland.



Madrid was a dull town, and the inhabitants and the streets were dull. The gentry were all dressed in black, with black neckerchiefs and black throats. The royal palace and the court were dull, but the town was very dull.

The festival was for a long time, and it is probable that there El Greco spent some of his free time years in Spain. He was a painter of altars, screens and panels, and he painted some of the most famous altars in Spain. He was a very good painter, and he was a very good painter.

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5. *San Jerónimo*, National Gallery, London.
6. *Caballero with Hand on Breast*, Prado.
7. *Young Couple Lighting Flame*, Simon, Berlin.

In the last three pictures you may see the beginning of his Spanish manner.



IX.



The Escorial is one of the most remarkable buildings in Europe, comprising a monastery, a church, a palace, and a mausoleum. It is situated about 3500 feet above the sea on the southwestern slopes of the Sierra de Guadarrama in the most bleak spot in all Spain.

Its position is wonderful. Unlike Greek temples, few Christian churches are well placed. Ruskin says that a Christian church rising out of the midst of the hovels of the people is a lovely spectacle. That is merely a sentimental point of view.

The ancient Greeks considered a beautiful site a spot that the surrounding country could see, instead of a point from which the landscape can be seen. The most famous example of this is the Acropolis at Athens.

The doors of a Greek temple were thrown open so that the Shrine could be seen by the multitude, for the Greeks worshipped from without.

The Christians worship within their churches. In building their places of worship the first demand was accessibility for worship. Christianity is emotional, paganism was intellectual.

The French were defeated by the Spanish at St. Quentin in 1557, on the day that was sacred to St. Lawrence, so the king decided to build the Escorial in commemoration of this fact and dedicated it: *El real Monasterio de San Lorenzo del Escorial*.

It was built by Toledo and Herrera, has seven towers, fifteen gateways and 12,000 windows and doors. It covers nearly 400,000 square feet of land, is built of stone, and is the same color as the landscape.

It contains a church of great grandeur, underneath the altar of which there is a royal mausoleum where lie the remains of Charles V and the members of the royal family who have followed him.

When El Greco arrived in Spain in 1572 he must have been greatly disappointed to find that the building of the Escorial was so backward, for we know that the church was not roofed in until 1580. It is believed,

however, that he worked there for some years, and it is supposed that he assisted Herrera, the architect, with his architectural drawings and in designing the altars and the statues which decorate the *façade* of the church.

What painting El Greco did in the church is mere surmise. El Mudo, a Spanish painter, was at work. Cambiaso was the first Italian artist to arrive. In 1587 Frederigo Zucarro followed, then "Tibaldi" or Pelligrini and the sculptor Leoni appeared.

Philip II did his best to have the church beautified, but the talent he was enabled to engage was not great. He sent for Vasari, Baroccio, and Clovio, but they refused to come to Spain.

It is supposed that El Greco designed the large altar screen. Cambiaso attempted to paint *The Martyrdom of San Lorenzo* and El Greco received an order from the king to paint *The Martyrdom of San Mauricio*. When they were finished the king did not like them.

He found El Greco's glorious painting too pagan, and objected that the martyr was being beheaded in the background of the picture, instead of in a more prominent position.

Philip had directed that the money for the very ex-

pensive ultramarine, which El Greco desired for his painting, should be advanced, but rejected the work of art as an altar piece when it was finished. It now hangs in the Chapter Room of the monastery in a much better light than that of the dismal church.

It is a large * and glorious picture and was painted between 1580 and 1584. The figures stand as if carved against the background and are perfectly wrought. It is ancient art with figures as in a primitive. It is resplendent in color—blues from turquoise to sapphire, yellows from orange to lemon, and luminous red as well as pink. It is the most colorful of all El Greco's paintings.

Of this masterwork Maier-Graefe, the German critic, says: "It is not only the most beautiful picture that El Greco painted, but it is also the most beautiful picture of mankind."

This painting is signed and the word *Cretense* also appears.



X.



Doña Maria de Silva died in 1575 at the Convent of San Domingo de Silo in Toledo, where she had lived

*4.44 x 3.02 metres.



pensive ultramarine, which El Greco desired for his painting, should be admired, but regarded the work of art as an altar piece when it was finished. It now hangs in the Chapter Room of the monastery in a much better light than that of the altar.

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The figures are the most beautiful and expressive that have ever appeared, but this also the most beautiful and expressive of all pictures.

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for thirty-eight years. She left a large fortune to the convent for the purpose of rebuilding not only the convent but also the church of San Domingo el Antiguo.

Don Diego de Castilla was appointed executor of the will and employed Veragara and others to carry out this great work. These architects were discharged the following year and Herrera was substituted. He was building the Town Hall at Toledo at the time.

In 1577 we find El Greco at work in San Domingo, so it must have been Herrera who persuaded him to go to Toledo and who gave him the order to design and also to paint the altar screens.

I fancy it was Herrera who brought him to Toledo and I believe that it was his love for his mistress, Doña Gerónima, that kept him there until his death, for in his last testament he describes her: *es persona de confianza y de buena conciencia*, showing thus great respect for his lady. Why did he not marry her? She probably had a husband, and divorce was contrary to the canons of the Church.

A little later, El Greco painted his first great work—*El Espolio*—for the main altar of the Sacristy in the Toledo Cathedral.

The archives at Toledo tell of the lawsuits that El

Greco brought for the purpose of obtaining what was due him for the paintings which he had executed.

It was the custom, when ordering a picture from an artist, to make him an advance and for a jury to decide what the final payment should be, when the picture was finished.

The amount offered him for his *El Espolio* seemed insufficient to El Greco, so he brought suit. During the trial he refused to answer the question: "What brought you to Toledo?" He replied: "That has nothing to do with the case." He informed the judges that he would rather lease his pictures than sell them at such low prices, for he felt certain that a day would come when they would be of great value.

It was on account of the success of his work in San Domingo, as well as the renown created by *El Espolio*, that Philip II gave him the order for *San Mauricio*, which was painted about 1580. Then followed what by many is thought to be his greatest work: *El Entierro del Conde De Orgaz*, which was painted for San Tomé in Toledo about 1584. This is a large picture, 4.80 by 3.60 metres, containing in the lower half of the picture about thirty-five figures, most of which are portraits.

There is no evidence that El Greco ever owned land in Spain. At the time of his death, he lodged in the palace of the Marques de Villana. This building does not now exist. The house which is today called the "House of El Greco," is where the widow of the Marques lived for some years.

El Greco died on April 17th, 1614, and, with the exception of a few pictures, left no earthly goods.

All great artists have painted some mediocre pictures, it is only the mediocre painters who produce pictures all of one level mediocrity. But there is not a single picture that is really known to be by El Greco that is not full of interest, and the study of his different periods is a delight.

Just before his death El Greco was stricken with humor. The human form divine was, as I have said, considered anathema. Between 1601 and 1614 he painted two pictures: *The Laocoön* and *The Apocalypse*, in which all but one of the figures are stark naked, for the breech cloths on the two figures in the first named picture were evidently added later by another hand.

El Greco, being very old, probably thought he would be forgiven and painted these two pictures as a final rebuke to a prejudiced world.



What makes the art of El Greco unlike the art of any other painter is, that when he arrived in Venice he found a manner of painting which had taken 300 years to develop. By copying this manner he gradually acquired a combination of Oriental and Venetian art. This combination made his work unusually interesting and most individual. Added to this he also acquired the power to express both suffering and ecstasy, as well as charm and elegance.

It seems probable that El Greco learned to paint large pictures with life size figures at Bassano, for it would have been impossible for an artist, who had produced small paintings only, suddenly to paint those very large and glorious pictures between 1574 and 1584. This was his greatest period.

The paintings were:

El Espolio, 1574, Toledo.

La Ascunción, 1577, Chicago.

El Entierro, 1584, Toledo.

The Titianesque *Assumption*, which is in Chicago, is the most important El Greco, and, possibly, the most





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It is probable that El Greco learned to paint in the manner of the Venetians by copying their works. He was a very poor painter when he first came to Venice, and he had to learn the art of painting by copying the works of the great masters. He was a very poor painter when he first came to Venice, and he had to learn the art of painting by copying the works of the great masters.

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important picture in America. It is large, being 3.85 x 1.96 metres, and the figures are life size.

This picture was painted for the altar of San Domingo in Toledo. It was coveted and acquired by the Infante Don Sabastian de Bourbon in 1830, who had it replaced by a poor copy. After passing through several hands it was purchased by Durand Ruel et Cie of Paris, who sold it to the Chicago Gallery where it suffers by being badly hung.

It was the study of the perspective in painting that gave El Greco the most trouble, for he had learned nothing on this subject while painting icons. He did not understand the gradual diminution of the figures in the background as is apparent in his early works. In Byzantine art the figures are huddled together and are of one size. He solved the question later as is quite evident in *San Mauricio*.

In his old age he sometimes returned to his old love and dropped all idea of perspective. In one of the landscapes he painted of the town of Toledo, the buildings in the distance are of the same size and height as those in the foreground. The art of landscape painting was in its infancy at the time and El Greco must have painted this picture in his studio, not as the town

really was, but as he thought it should be, for the Alcazar appears much larger than the Cathedral and is placed on the wrong side of the latter.

One of the peculiarities of El Greco was the number of pictures he painted of the same subject. It is said he produced ten more or less similar paintings of *San Francisco*. This tendency probably came from his early education in painting icons.

At times he seems to have worked very rapidly, for example the *Apostles* in Toledo appear to have been executed quickly and without the slightest correction. Then again he must have painted slowly and with great care for some of his work resembles miniature painting.

He painted three pictures of *Christ Healing the Blind*, three of *Christ in the Temple*, each one different, correcting in the later pictures what he considered were faults in the earlier examples. Of *San Jerónimo* he painted two similar pictures one slightly smaller than the other. There are three examples of *El Espolio* in existence, each different from the others, as to composition as well as to size. There is a second *San Mauricio* in the Royal Gallery at Bucharest. It is one-quarter the size of the picture in the Escorial and different in

conception. There is a picture of *San Martin and the Beggar* in Toledo, and a smaller example in the Widener Collection in Philadelphia.

It is difficult to describe El Greco's coloring for in no two of his pictures are the colors alike. If half a dozen paintings by our artist were hung side by side, it would be possible to recognize who had painted them by the technique, but not so easy to place them by their coloring. He used color more as an expression than as a decoration. Some of his pictures are golden in color, others are steel gray, then again certain of his works resemble frescoes.

A beautiful and original hand with unusually spaced tapered fingers is found in many of his pictures. It is the right hand of Christ in *El Espolio*, the hand on the breast of the *Caballero*. It appears in *La Asunción*, *La Resurrección*, *Santiago*, *San Ildefonso*, *La Magdalena* and in the many pictures he painted of *San Francisco*.

He also painted the naked human foot in an original manner. The second toe is unduly long and widely separated from the big toe. This seems unnatural today, but is quite possible in a foot that had been formed by wearing a sandal.



XII.



It is only in late years that the art of El Greco has had any direct influence on modern art, for it was practically unknown outside of Spain.

The travellers, artists, and critics who journeyed through Spain were so impressed by the greatness of Velásquez that they totally overlooked El Greco.

El Greco's style is peculiar and is difficult to describe. It appeals to an artist or true connoisseur, but not to the ordinary traveller. A possessor of real art appreciation cannot help being interested even in his most grotesque figures, while the uninitiated observer passes them over in bewilderment.

In Kugler's "Handbook of Art," 1861, El Greco's name does not even appear. Others mention him as a madman. One critic speaks of him as follows:

"Il a des abus de blanc et de noir, des oppositions violentes, des teintes singulières, des attitudes strapassées, des draperies cassées et chiffonnées à plaisir, mais dans tout cela règnent une énergie dépravée, une puissance maladive qui trahissent le grand peintre et le fou de génie. Peu de tableaux m'ont autant intéressé que ceux du Greco, car les plus mauvais ont





EL ENTIERRO (FRAGMENT)

toujours quelque chose d'inattendu et de chevauchant hors du possible, qui vous surprend et vous fait rêver."

Ford says: "He was very unequal, what he did well was excellent, while what he did ill was worse than anything done by anybody else. He was often more lengthy than Fuseli and as leaden as cholera morbus."

Sir Edmund Head writes of *El Espolio*: "Its position and the glow of its color, as well as the grouping of the subordinate personages, gives a unity to this work that has rarely been surpassed."

In more recent times the critics have been more complimentary.

Señor Bereute, the celebrated Spanish critic, remarks:

"C'est une véritable énigme que son procédé, tantôt il paraît compliqué, tantôt il est si simple qu'on peut suivre la trace du coup de pinceau sur la préparation rougeâtre de la toile. Le Greco empâte en général ses chairs sans exagération, à petites touches, et il ajoute quelques coups de pinceau définitifs très accentués mais très délicats."

It was through Velásquez only that El Greco has had great influence on modern art.

Velásquez was but fifteen years old when El Greco

died and it is not probable that he knew him, but no doubt he was greatly impressed by his paintings which were well known and intimately studied by him.

Writing of the early life of Velásquez Señor Bereute says:

“Pendant cette période de la vie de Velásquez, se produisit un fait digne de remarque, étant donnée la personnalité et l'indépendance du maître. Il s'agit de l'influence indiscutable qu'exercèrent alors sur lui les tableaux de Greco. Il les vit et les étudia sans doute à Tolède. Velásquez qui s'était soustrait à l'influence de Rubens et qui avait échappé aux séductions des Vénitiens, trouva sans doute chez le Greco quelque chose de supérieur qu'il tâcha de s'assimiler.”

Velásquez visited and painted in Italy but with the exception of the portrait of the Pope Innocent X, which hangs in the Doria Gallery in Rome, and reminds one of Titian, he seems to have adopted but little that was Italian.

Señor Bereute writes further:

“L'adoption par Velásquez de teintes gris argenté dans la coloration des chairs, l'emploi de certains carmins, une plus grande liberté d'exécution, tels sont les points où se fait sentir l'influence du Greco. Il lui doit

certaines finesses de coloris, une harmonie de tons gris distinguée, que ses toiles ne présentaient pas jusque-là. L'étude du Greco lui apprend à employer les gris fins dans le coloris des chairs et enrichit sa palette de plusieurs couleurs nouvelles." This was written by the best technical and artistic biographer of Velásquez.

Cossio's opinion is:

"El Greco was the only master of Velásquez and Velásquez was El Greco's only disciple."

PORTRAITS

PORTRAITS

El Greco appears to have been much interested in painting portraits, for there are some thirty odd still in existence that are known to be by him. Throughout his career he also had the habit of placing portraits in his large as well as his smaller pictures.

He did not paint portraits of dwarfs or *crétins* but confined himself to the best society of his day. His subjects were ladies, clericals, friars, and caballeros, or Spanish noblemen. He painted an artist, a doctor, and a poet. It is by these portraits that we may study the history of the native types in Spain during the XVI century. They illustrate the physical as well as the moral expression of the best class of the Castilian people, and they show plainly that it was this class that was frequented by our artist. They are living people, full of life and spirit. These portraits differ from those of the Italian and German schools in the fact that they might well have been painted at the present time.

The eyes in most of the portraits one sees are of self-satisfied people, or of persons who appear to be thoroughly bored, but the eyes that El Greco painted

are quite different. His subjects have eyes that are full of spirit and expression, eyes that seem to see something of great interest or else are animated by some bright thought. They are not fixed, but appear to beam with intelligence. He was not only a painter of men but also a portrayer of souls.

There are faults in drawing and in light and shadow in his early portraits, but during his Spanish days he produced numerous examples of great interest, taste and beauty.

One of the traits of El Greco was that he often placed his own portrait as well as those of his friends in his pictures. His own portrait is in *El Espolio* and in *San Mauricio* as well as in other pictures, and there is also a self-painted portrait of our artist in Madrid.

In the large painting *El Entierro del Conde De Orgaz* we see in the heavens an enthroned Christ surrounded by saints to whom the soul of the dead Count is being offered. In the lower half of the picture, St. Augustine and Saint Stephen are gently placing the armor-clad body of the Count in the tomb while some thirty courtiers, including El Greco, watch the ceremony with sad faces. The courtiers are all portraits of prominent hidalgos and clericals.



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One of the traits of El Greco was that he often placed his own portrait as well as those of his friends in his pictures. His own portrait is in *El Espolio* and in *San Juan* and in many of his other pictures, and there is also a portrait of his brother of our artist, El Greco.

El Greco was a very religious man, and he was very fond of the Virgin Mary. He was also very fond of the Holy Trinity. He was a very good man, and he was very kind to his friends. He was a very good artist, and he was very good at what he did. He was a very good man, and he was very kind to his friends. He was a very good artist, and he was very good at what he did.

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It is not my purpose to describe the portraits El Greco painted. Description is impossible without criticism, and I do not pretend to be a critic. Then again it is impossible to describe from memory what one has not seen for some years.

I include a list of the known portraits and also reproductions of a few that please me most.

EL GRECO
and
BASSANO

FOREWORD

WHEN El Greco, coming from Crete, arrived in Venice, in 1560, he was twenty-two years old. It is believed that he could find no employment at first, for his Byzantine manner of painting was out of fashion. He is supposed to have worked later for ten years in the studio of Jacopo Da Ponte, known as Jacopo Bassano, in the town of Bassano.

There are no pictures in existence with the name of El Greco coupled with that of Bassano, as there are of Bassano and Francesco, his son, at a later period, so that it is difficult to decide just what El Greco did during that period in the way of assisting Jacopo, his master, in his work.

Bassano, the artist, had decided peculiarities in his early days, in the subjects he chose to paint, in his manner of representing the human form, and in his colors. As great changes appear in his mode of painting during the years that El Greco was with him, it is surmised that it was the hand of the Greek that was the cause of the great improvement in his paintings.

I say surmise, for it is almost impossible to say what part of these productions was drawn or painted

by El Greco, as he was obliged to copy the Bassano manner, yet it is evident that it was he who gradually improved this manner, and eventually helped to create what are known as Bassano's greatest pictures.

F. G. G.



I.



JACOPO BASSANO is said to have been a very genial man, with no vanity, and a most generous worker.

It cannot be said that he was over generous to El Greco, his helper, for the latter's name does not appear on any studio picture. The reason for this probably was that Bassano had a great name at that time, and his patrons demanded Bassano paintings.

A vast number of pictures, both large and small, came from that studio during the master's long life. He also painted many portraits as well as frescoes.

Mr. Henry Ford did not originate *mass production*. It was originated by Titian, Bassano, and Rubens. Their workshops produced many more pictures than they possibly could have painted notwithstanding that they lived long in years. Rubens gave the world over three thousand important works. This was made

possible by the assistance of Van Dyck and numerous other young artists.

Bassano had El Greco to help him for ten years, and he was followed by Bassano's four sons: Francesco, Leandro, Giambattista, and Gerelamo. Francesco painted well, but Leandro became the best artist of the four.

The house in which Jacopo was born, and in which his grandfather died in 1502, still stands, also the *Casa Michieli*, the *façade* of which shows frescoes painted by the master. He was sent at an early age to Venice, where he studied painting in Bonifazio's studio, but returned to Bassano, and it is believed that his patrons were the rich merchants who owned villas on the Brenta.

The Bassano school of painting flourished for many years after the master's death.

A sufficient number of Bassano's pictures are signed and dated to enable one to note that during his lifetime he developed three different manners of painting.

His first manner was prior to 1562. His figures are squat in shape, with overdeveloped arms and legs. The naked foot is drawn square in form, and the profiles of the faces of his subjects are quite round. There is





very little imagination and no sentiment in these early pictures. They are all quite matter-of-fact examples of art.

He evidently had a great love for animals, for there is a dog or two, and often a cat, in almost every picture.

The dogs that he painted as well as those found in Veronese's paintings give very good evidence that the Renaissance did not touch the canine world.

If you examine these pictures as well as those Bassano painted after 1572, during his third period, you will find that they greatly resemble one another. There are the same faults in perspective, the same pastoral scenes and animal life.

In his old age, his favorite subject seems to have been Noah's Ark. In one such picture he assembles not only all the beasts of the field, but all the birds that fly in the air as well. During this, his last period, his paintings become very sombre and dark in color.

Between these two periods, or from 1562-1572, a number of very superior paintings were produced in the studio at Bassano. We find the figures in these pictures more elongated, more graceful and sympathetic. There is more soul and sentiment in the composition. The perspective improves, and the colors,

instead of being placed here and there in spots, are now diffused. The sky changes from midday to early morning or late sunset, and is streaked with a red and golden glow. The animals practically disappear. Probably to please the master, a well painted donkey is introduced now and then.

Notwithstanding all this change, these pictures are plainly "Bassano," for they are painted in the Bassano manner; yet it is quite evident that another hand was doing some of the drawing, and some one, not the master, was inspiring the composition. If it was Bassano who held the pencil and the brush, his hand was guided by a genius that he himself had not formerly possessed.

Jacopo was fifty-two years old in 1562. It is quite possible that at that age an artist might change his method of painting as far as color is concerned, but hardly probable that his manner of drawing should undergo a complete revolution.

We find much more elegance in the drawing. The hands and feet of the subjects are drawn in a totally different manner from those in the early pictures.

There was evidently some one in that studio at work besides Bassano, some artist who had great skill as well

as a soul, but who was hampered in his work during those ten years by the fact that he had to produce Bassano pictures for the master's patrons, or at least help the master to create them.

It is often difficult to decide which part of these pictures was drawn or painted by Bassano himself. Some of them, I fancy, he never touched, yet they resemble Bassano's work. His assistant let himself go now and then, and both drew and painted in a more individual manner. His position was a difficult one, for apparently he was allowed to go only just so far.

I can imagine that when Jacopo discovered that El Greco had the ability to copy his methods, he instructed him to paint certain subjects while he himself was employed with frescoes and with the numerous portraits which he produced.

I have no desire to depreciate Bassano in order to glorify El Greco, for Jacopo at his best was a very good and highly considered painter. His pictures give great pleasure, owing to the skilful management of light and shade, and by the great beauty of the colors.

Bassano was the first artist to put Biblical stories into modern versions, and he was the first landscape painter in Italy, for the landscapes that Bellini and

others had placed in their paintings are all evidently idealistic.



II.



It is probable that El Greco undertook the journey to Venice because he had been impressed by the Bellini pictures he had seen in Crete, and understood that there were greater things than Byzantine art.

Byzantine art means the art of Constantinople, or *Byzantium*, and of the Byzantine Empire. It represents the form of art which followed the classical, after the transitional interval of the Early Christian period. It continued through the Middle Ages, came to Europe by the way of Venice, and had great influence during the Middle Ages.

The history of art during the Roman epoch may be divided into Roman and Hellenic-Asiatic art.

In Byzantine art, one often finds that the figures are elongated. According to their custom, the artists believed the human body should measure *nine heads*. This means it should be drawn to represent nine times the length of the head. In early Italian art, the estimate was six heads, which was supposed to be normal.

As El Greco was educated in the Byzantine school, this may account in part for his inclination to elongate his subjects. His most elongated figures are in his narrow pictures. When the canvas is broad, the figures are usually normal.

In Byzantine painting the Virgin's tunic is always painted blue and the pallium is red. In Italian art the colors are reversed, the pallium is blue and the tunic is red. We see by El Greco's *Holy Family* that he adopted the Italian coloring.

One of the peculiarities of Byzantine art is that the artists had no knowledge of perspective. The figures they drew were all of one size and huddled together. Diminution was unknown to them. They employed a subtle system of producing an effect of depth only.

The art of perspective was the chief thing that El Greco had to study, and we find by his early pictures that the knowledge came to him slowly. He finally mastered it, but sometimes he returned to his first love, and painted pictures in which no allowance is made for perspective.

What impresses one most in the Orient is its color scheme. Every figure that passes in the narrow street

or crowded bazaar carries splashes of color in sash and turban. Color dominates the scene.

Men reveal themselves in what they make of whatever kind, both useful and ornamental. This is exemplified in their works of art.

The art of the West gives one an impression of intellect expressed in form, while in that of the East the appeal is in its richness and intensity of color. Color is sensuous and emotional when employed in the Eastern manner.

The Church, from the earliest times, encouraged the influence of color upon the emotions. She became the great patron of art, and employed artists to create pictures and works of sculpture representing the Holy Family and the Saints. She had the walls of her churches beautified with mosaics and paintings of religious subjects, in order to instruct those who could not read and to stimulate their devotion.

The Church in this manner encouraged the influence of color upon the emotions.

When it is said of a man that he leads a colorless life it means that he has few emotions.



III.



If El Greco had passed those ten years in Florence instead of in Bassano it is quite possible he might have become just as great an artist, but he would not have developed into the colorist that he finally became.

Florence subordinated color to form. She was intellectual, and bred intellectual men. Venice did not; she was obliged to import them. On the other hand, Venice was emotional. This she had inherited from the Orient. Form is Western in feeling, emotion is Eastern.

Venice used color in a sensuous manner, for all her traditions were Oriental, and the East is sensuous. She subordinated form to color, which means she used color not as a decoration but as an emotional gesture. It was not that she used much color or bright colors, for a little emotional color goes farther than much that is decorative. It was its scheme of *chiaroscuro* that made the school of Venetian painting famous. The great colorists are distinguished by their mastery of light and shadow. They softened the intellectual appeal of form by a sensuous use of color.

The art of Florence promoted profound thought, the art of Venice inspired deep feeling. Europe followed Florence and became intellectual. That this added greatly to the happiness of the individual is a question, for there is little happiness without emotion.

That El Greco solved the theory of color in painting can readily be seen in *San Mauricio*. Of this picture Robert Byron wrote:

“Hidden away in the Escorial lies an aesthetic experience which the world can offer but once to any man . . . Greco received the commission in his prime. It was 1580; he was thirty-nine. The impression of Spain was still fresh upon him; the long suppressed tradition of his race was in its first flower. And it was his opportunity, the opportunity which, in all probability, he had come to Spain to seek. The Escorial was in its newness, an impressive monument to all the hopeless folly and materialism of its time. Royal favor meant fame, employment, setting magnificent, field inexhaustible. The artist was on his mettle; he made reservations with a view to complete success. ‘It has come to my intelligence,’ wrote Philip II while the Armada was already building, ‘that for lack of fine colors, and payment for labor on the work, he (Greco)

will not undertake it. And since it suits me that it should be completed as soon as may be, I instruct you (the Prior) to supply him with some of those colors which he demands, especially ultra-marine. And as regards money, you may supply him with some on account.'

"The picture was painted to measure for the high altar, nine feet ten inches in breadth, fourteen feet nine inches in height. It was not finished, despite the Royal interest and assistance, until August, 1584.

"Then the King, forswearing his last chance of reputation, withheld his approval. Greco, one feels, must in his heart of hearts have expected this result. He had put his whole soul and being into the picture; and he must have known, by this time, that this was not the sort of thing that kings, any more than cathedral chapters, demanded. 'That it did not please his Majesty,' wrote Siguenza in 1605, 'is not surprising; for he (Greco) pleases few people; although they say it has a lot of art in it, and that the artist knows a lot . . .'

"To describe the picture is useless. Conceived with the restricted palette of a fresco, but in such coloring, submarine blue from the rim of the Aegean, and yellow

distilled from lemons and spring flowers, that it holds the moon prisoner for its assistance, it simply exhibits the superlative of all the principles, which comprise the one principle of interpretational art, which the Byzantines discovered, and which have survived the vagaries of classical and rational taste for a further efflorescence in the twentieth century."

At Toledo there is a long and narrow landscape of the city painted by El Greco. In it there is a wonderful map of the town, which is held up by a boy in bright green attire. The picture bears an inscription, which, when translated, reads: "It has been necessary to put the hospital of Don Juan Tavera in the form of a model (that on the cloud), because it not only so happened as to conceal the Visagara Gate, but thrust up its dome or cupola in such a manner that it overtopped the town; once put thus as a model, and removed from its place, I thought it should show the *façade* before any other part of it; how the rest of it is related to the town will be seen on the map.

"Also in the story of Our Lady who brings the chasuble to St. Ildefonso for his embellishment, so as to enlarge the figures, I have availed myself, to a certain extent, of their being heavenly bodies, in the same





way as lights seen from afar appear large however small they may be."

He paints a view of the city but moves a building to suit his artistic eye and, with humor, informs the public they may find where it belongs by consulting the map!

The story of Our Lady, which he mentions, is depicted in the sky above the city. The color in this picture is wonderful. Greenish yellow, wine pink, and cold blue. Finally, at the very top of the picture, a trace of orange vermillion. Only a Byzantine could have selected such colors.

The works of El Greco have been conveniently divided into three main periods with which I cannot quite agree.

We know that his early pictures are of the Venetian school, but after he arrived in Spain he seems to have painted according to his inclination at the moment. He would paint a great picture, like the *Assumption*, that is Titianesque in manner, and follow it with a painting of his individual impressionist type. This continued throughout his life.

During his old age he created the *Laocoön* and the *Apocalypse*, and also painted several portraits which

show none of the characteristics shown in the first named pictures. His *Dream of Philip II*, painted between 1594 and 1604, is Venetian in treatment both as to the figures, the drapery, and the composition.

This does away with the theory that he was astigmatic. Some of his religious pictures are distorted, but the portraits he painted all through life are not. This seems to exclude any possibility of impaired vision.

I believe that the distorted figures in these religious pictures represent what in his mind was the condition of religious belief at that sad period. It was the *auto da fé* of mind, body, and soul that depressed him. I hardly think that his own belief disturbed him, but that he was greatly affected by the very apparent mental and bodily suffering that was being caused by the fanatical practices of his day. This inspired him to express his feelings in this subtle manner.

A composition which pleased him was used over and over, but each time was treated in a manner slightly different as to line, form, and light.

He was a painter of emotions, and painted as the spirit moved him.

I find it is quite possible to date the portraits

painted by El Greco by the neckwear of the Caballeros he painted. From 1570 to 1590 the Spanish gentleman wore a standing ruff edged with lace. About 1590 the officers of the Spanish army in the Low Countries evidently brought the Dutch fashions to Spain, for we see the full ruff in those portraits which were painted between 1594 and 1614.

Many people have wondered why El Greco painted so many pictures of San Francisco. In the XVI century there was a Franciscan monastery in almost every large town in Spain. It is probable that the painting that the artist executed for the monastery in Toledo had such a success that El Greco at once received orders from other monasteries for pictures of their patron saint. There are at least a dozen of such paintings still in existence. No two are alike, yet they all resemble one another in inspiration and ecstasy.



IV.



At the time that El Greco was at work in Jacopo Bassano's studio, from 1560 to 1570, he had not yet acquired any of the eccentricities in painting that appear in some of his later pictures in Spain, yet he had

two decided peculiarities which he retained throughout his life, and by which his works can be traced.

He painted a beautiful hand with delicately tapered fingers, and these fingers were strangely spaced. The two middle fingers are close together, while the first finger and the little finger are widely separated from the others.

It is the right hand of Christ in *El Espolio*, the hand on the breast of the *Caballero*, it appears in *La Ascensión*, *La Resurrección*, *Santiago*, *San Ildefonso*, *La Magdalena*, and, among many others, in the numerous pictures he painted of *San Francisco*.

When I first saw the *Caballero with Hand on Breast* at the Prado, I thought it meant: "This is myself"—a self-painted portrait, but when I discovered that Christ, the Madonna, and most of the Saints used the same gesture, I was satisfied that it was but a pleasing custom of the artist to place the hand in this position.

There is only one painting by Giovanni Bellini in the Prado. It is a Madonna and Christ Child with Mary Magdalene and Saint Ursula. The latter, with clasped hands, is praying. The fingers of the right hand are spaced in the El Greco manner. This beauti-

ful picture belonged at one time to Philip V, but where it was in El Greco's day I do not know. It is quite possible that El Greco acquired his mode of drawing the human hand from the Bellini's picture, or perhaps from Veronese.

Leandro Bassano sometimes drew an imitation of the same hand, but he probably copied it from his father's assistant.

I know of no other artist of that period who spaced the fingers of the hand in this fashion, yet it is quite possible that it was done, but where you find it in Bassano's paintings it is undoubtedly the work of El Greco. It is an unmistakable characteristic of his drawing.

El Greco also drew the naked foot in a different manner from that employed by the Venetian artists. His is the Greek foot that is found in ancient Greek sculpture. The second toe is longer than the great toe, and they are widely separated. The toes are also often inordinately long.

It is possible by these two decided peculiarities alone to trace El Greco's handiwork.



V.



I know of a dozen or more important pictures which are attributed to Bassano, but which I believe were painted in part or wholly by El Greco. I do not propose to name them, for I do not wish to excite Bassano's friends and admirers.

What I propose to do is to show three plates of pictures that are either signed by Bassano or attributed to him, and in which it is not difficult to recognize El Greco's handiwork. Any one who is interested in the subject may then continue the search, and have the same pleasure that I have enjoyed.

The first plate is of Bassano's *Last Supper*, which hangs in the Villa Borghese in Rome. It represents the moment just after Christ had said: *He that dip-peth his hand with me in the dish shall betray me.* Matt. xxvi. 23.

This picture, although attributed to Bassano, is probably an early studio painting by El Greco, for it has faults in drawing which Jacopo would hardly have made. The hands with the long fingers are distinctly El Greco, and the right hand of Christ makes his familiar gesture. The left arm and hand are quite out



and a dozen or more important pictures which are attributed to Bassano, but which I believe were painted in part or wholly by Tit Greco. I do not propose to go any further, for I do not wish to excite Bassano's friends and admirers.

What I propose to do is to show three plates of pictures that are either signed by Bassano or attributed to him, and in which it is not difficult to recognize his own handwork. Any one who is interested in the subject may then continue the search, and have no reason to regret that I have enjoyed.

It is a pity that I cannot show more than a few of these pictures, but I have been obliged to select only a few of the most important ones. I have also been obliged to select only a few of the most important ones.

The pictures which I have selected are of various sizes, and of various subjects. They are all, however, of the same quality, and all of them are of the same date. They are all, however, of the same quality, and all of them are of the same date.



of drawing. As Christ is standing erect behind the seated John, His hand could not possibly reach the dish on the table. The feet under the table are of the type drawn by the Greek, and they are strangely placed.

It is a very agitated picture. The Apostles are all gesticulating. This is quite unknown in Bassano's work. His picture of the same subject, in the Brera at Milan, is totally without movement, while Greco painted several agitated pictures—the *Apocalypse* for example.

The head of Christ is the same as the head in the artist's Spanish picture, *The Blessing Jesus*. The faces of the Apostles are not Italian nor of the refined type one finds in Bassano's paintings. The hands with the long fingers are also quite unlike his manner of drawing.

Bassano always painted "pretty" pictures. This painting is tragic.



VI.



Plate II represents a picture which hangs in the Brera in Milan. The subject is *St. Roch Visiting the Victims of the Pest*, and it is signed by Bassano. The

composition of the lower half of the picture, the jumbled figures and the uninteresting architectural design, are evidently Bassano's work. If the whole kneeling figure of the woman is not painted by El Greco, her hands at least and her dress appear to have been.

What makes the painting great is the gracefully beautiful vision of the Virgin in the sky. This part of the picture was probably drawn and painted by the Greek.

The charming hands with the crossed fingers and the foot with toes that are too long, the pointed chin of the Virgin, and the grace of the whole aerial composition, are familiar. It is all painted in quite a different manner from the lower part of the picture. In the original it is very apparent that two quite different artists have been at work.

I believe that it was El Greco who beautified what would have been a very banal picture by Bassano, and made it a great work of art.







VII.



Plate III illustrates a picture in Modena which I believe was conceived, drawn, and painted by El Greco, although it is accredited to Bassano.

In the first place, it is a picture of two Saints—St. Paul and St. Peter—side by side. This is Byzantine in conception, and seldom found in Italian art. In the second place, at no time during his long life did Bassano produce a similar painting.

The figures resemble Bassano models taken from earlier pictures, but there is no resemblance to the style of Bassano, either in the drawing or in the painting. The figures are now most graceful. The refined hands and the strangely drawn feet with abnormally long toes are decidedly El Greco. The picture is painted in a free style in the Greek's manner.

The colors of the Saints' raiment are dark green and light yellow, but they have faded sadly. The hands and feet and other parts of the picture have been badly retouched.

It seems to be the most characteristic example of El Greco's work during his ten years in the studio at Bassano, and it is a very beautiful picture.



VIII.



It is the man El Greco that interests me most. To me he is very sympathetic and he reminds me of Don Quixote.

Cervantes and Greco lived during the same period and died two years apart. It is supposed that they were great friends. The so-called Bereute portrait, which now hangs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is purported to be a self-painted portrait of El Greco. It most surely presents the face of a *Caballero de la triste figura*.

That he was adventuresome and brave we know by his journeys from Crete to Venice, Rome, and Spain. He had to fight *windmills* all his lifetime, first at Bassano and later in Rome and in Spain.

That he was a dreamer full of romance we can see by his pictures, for he depicted it both with pencil and with brush. He was also very sentimental.

I know of no other man in history who, after living long years with a woman who was not his wife, had the tenderness to describe his lady love as El Greco described Doña Gerónima in his last will and testament: *es persona de confianza y de buena conciencia*.





It is the man El Greco that interests me most. To me he is very sympathetic and he reminds me of Don Quixote.

Doménikos and Tzanes lived together for many years and died two years apart. It is supposed that they were great friends. The so-called *triste portrait*, which now hangs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is purported to be a self-painted portrait of El Greco. It most surely presents the face of a *triste* as in *triste figura*.

That he was adventuresome and brave we know by his journeys from Crete to Venice, Rome, and Spain. He lived to fight swordsmen and his famous line of *El Greco* and *El Greco* in *El Greco* and *El Greco*.

That *El Greco* was a *triste* as in *triste figura* we know by his *triste* as in *triste figura* and his *triste* as in *triste figura*.

El Greco was a *triste* as in *triste figura* who, after living long years with a woman who was not his wife, had the tenderness to describe his lady love as El Greco *triste* as in *triste figura* to his *triste* as in *triste figura* and *triste* as in *triste figura*.



Appendix

VENICE

What was the Renaissance?

The world had recovered from the confusion consequent upon the dissolution of the Roman Empire. The Teutonic tribes had become Christianized, civilized, and assimilated to the previously Latinized races over whom they exercised the authority of conquerors. It was the last stage of the Middle Ages emerging from ecclesiastical and feudal despotism, developing what was original in medieval ideas by the light of classic arts and letters, holding in itself the promise of the modern world. It was the revival of learning, and the endeavor of man to free himself from theological despotism.

Society at large could not appreciate what explosive power had been created by this new learning. It was a golden age of ease, with a state religion that many people and even some of the Popes, did not regard seriously.

Italian society exhibited an almost unexampled spectacle of literary, artistic, and courtly refinement crossed by brutality, treason, poison, and assassination. Meanwhile the people grew up unused to arms. When Italy, from 1494-1530, became the battlefield of the French, German, and Spanish forces, it was seen to what a point of helplessness the political, moral, and social conditions of the Renaissance had brought the Italian people. In the end it brought about the Reformation.



As it is supposed that El Greco worked in the studio of Jacopo Da Ponte, who was known as Bassano (1510-1592), in the town of Bassano, which lies on the Brenta sixty kilometres northwest of Venice, from 1560 to 1570, it may be well to consider the conditions in Venice at that time.

Although it was quite a distance to travel in those days, there can be little doubt that Bassano, and his helper El Greco, went often to Venice, for great things were being created, both in painting and in architecture, in the city on the lagoon. There was much to see, to learn, and to enjoy.

It is probable that when the first few people fled from the mainland to the islands on the *Laguna* for asylum from the incursions of the Huns, Goths, and Lombards, they found these islands sparsely settled by fisher folk, and that it was by their example and with their assistance that they became a seafaring and trading people.

The first small village of Rialto developed slowly into the rich and beautiful city of Venice, which

eventually governed not only the Dalmatian Coast, but Cyprus, Crete, and other Eastern Colonies as well.

Venice profited greatly by the Crusades. She fought wars at sea with the Turk and with Genoa, and hired mercenaries to fight against Milan in an attempt to hold Padua, Verona, and Bergamo, for these cities were necessary as outlets for her manufactures, as well as for the goods that arrived on her ships from the Orient.

The peculiarity of the city was that it was built on islands that were connected by bridges. The early bridges were inclined planes, for they had horses in Venice at that time. There was an edict that every horse and mule should have a bell. In 1392 a law put an end to riding in the Merceria, or market place, on account of the crowd, but Doge Michele Steno's stud was stabled where the Zecca now stands, in 1490, and was celebrated. The first Rialto bridge was a bridge of boats.

Gondolas are first mentioned in 1094. They became so lavishly decorated with painting, and with gay awnings and cloth of gold, that the Great Council in the XVI century passed an edict making black the compulsory color; and so it has remained.

When El Greco arrived in Venice in 1560 her commerce had begun to dwindle. Her merchants were still rich and very extravagant. They were building palaces, hanging them with costly velvets, and filling them with works of art, but the city was changing from a great emporium into the greatest pleasure city ever known. The term *Carnival of Venice* became the synonym that expressed joy and gaiety. She attracted many great artists and architects, also most of the rogues of Europe from Aretino to Casanova. In Longhi's day (1702-1762) the city's life seems to have developed into a continuous *masquerade*.

Venice is a picture city today. She is supported by the money left by the *forestieri* who journey there to feast on her beauty, and to dream of her great past. She is but little larger than she was in 1500. Some of her buildings have crumbled and have been rebuilt. She has faded like a woman; her beauty is however still her glory, and in her heyday it must have been resplendent beyond compare.



It is possible to trace the history of the architecture of the Renaissance by a study of the pictures painted during that period of history.

The frescoes painted by Benozzo Gozzoli (b. 1424) on the walls of the Campo Santo at Pisa, and in the church of San Gimignano, have preserved a picture of the type of house known in Italy at that time.

The Roman house, like that of the Greek, presented a blank wall to the world, but now we find a more democratic structure. The *loggia* appears, with its social function and the roof is used as a terrace. The donjon-like life of the Middle Ages had passed, and fresh air is now welcomed. Guests were welcome as well, for the houses are now entered by gracious doorways, and there are windows for light and air.

In Domenico Morone's pictures one sees how the streets and the houses looked, and what the street life resembled.

Mantegna (1431-1506) and Ghirlandajo (1449-1494) employ reminiscent architecture and architectural ornamentation with which to beautify their

pictures, and so on, down to the days of Tiepolo (1692-1769), architecture seems to have impressed the artists and to have greatly influenced their art.

It should be noted also that many Renaissance painters, in other countries as well as in Italy, were not always content to copy or even paraphrase actual buildings, but often invented decorative and constructive motives, and sometimes even whole buildings, such as never existed, and in some cases could not possibly have been built.

Before going to Rome in 1564, Veronese had painted *The Marriage at Cana*, which is now in the Louvre. It contains too many figures, and the architectural design is a mixture of Doric and Corinthian columns. These he no doubt borrowed from Sansovino's *Libreria*.

When Veronese returned from Rome, he painted the large *Repast at Levi's House*, now in the *Accademia* at Venice. It is very evident that his taste had been greatly improved by the study of classic architecture in Rome, and possibly by what Palladio had created in Venice, namely *San Giorgio Maggiore*, for we find his later painting far superior in every way. The picture is better balanced, there are fewer figures, and they are well spaced. There is a harmony about the

picture that does not exist in the earlier work. The Roman-like arches, with beautiful Corinthian columns, frame the picture, and beyond one sees delicately outlined buildings and the sky. It is evident that what he had seen and understood in architecture had brought about this great improvement in taste, style, and beauty.

It is quite possible to trace the continuous growth of Venice through the successive styles of Byzantine, Gothic, Early Renaissance, and Late Renaissance architecture. It is all to be found there. The great examples of the two early periods are San Marco and the Doges' Palace, yet all architecture in Venice has a Venetian development, and is seldom pure.

Although there are beautiful Gothic churches in Venice, such as the Frari, S. S. Giovanni e Paolo, and San Stefano, the domestic architecture is more striking. The Cà d'Oro (1421) and the Palazzo Loredan, for example.

Towards the end of the XV century Venetian architecture began to feel the influence of the classical revival, but developed a special form called Lombardesque, which was adapted by the architects Lombardi. It is intermediary between Venetian Gothic and full



picture did not last long in the early north. The Roman-like arches, with beautiful Corinthian columns, frame the picture, and beyond one sees delicately moulded battlements and gables. It is evident that one has had seen and understood in architecture had brought about this great improvement in taste and beauty.

It is quite possible to trace the continuous growth of Venice through the successive styles of Ugotho, Gothic, Early Renaissance, and later Renaissance architecture. It is all in the hand of the Venetians. The two early periods are San Marco and the Doges' Palace, yet all architecture in Venice has a Venetian character, and a Venetian style.

Although there are beautiful Gothic churches in Venice, such as the Friari, S. S. Giovanni e Paolo, and San Marco, the Venetian architecture is more evident in the Palazzo Doro (1427) and the Palazzo Foscari, the Palazzo.

From the end of the XV century Venetian architecture began to feel the influence of the classical revival, but developed a special form called Lombardism, which was adapted by the architects Lombardi. It is intermediary between Venetian Gothic and full



Renaissance, and was often decorated in a Byzantine manner with applied marbles.

The full splendor of the Renaissance began when Sansovino built the *Libreria Vecchia* in 1536. The Renaissance *Scuola di San Rocco* was begun before the *Libreria*, and finished later.

In 1560 Palladio arrived in Venice from Vicenza, and designed *San Giorgio Maggiore* on the Guidecca. It created a great sensation, owing to its classic simplicity. It was admired by those who knew, but the general public thought it was too cold in style for Venice. This belief was strengthened ten years later when he built the *Redentore*.

The Venetians could not understand, nor did they appreciate, Palladio. If they had, they would not have built *Santa Maria Salute* so soon after his death.

That El Greco noticed what was going on in Venice in the way of architecture is very evident in the three pictures he painted of *Christ in the Temple*. The design of the Temple improves greatly from picture to picture.

San Marco was in those days the centre of all that is beautiful in Venice, and it is the same today.

El Greco must have found himself at home there, but he had arrived at an evil moment, for Zucatto was

replacing some of the beautiful Byzantine mosaics by those designed by Titian and Tintoretto.

The Western feeling had begun its evil work. The West never understood mosaics, nor did the Arabs. They both used mosaics as decorations in conjunction with stone, stucco, and wood. The true Byzantine theory was to use them structurally in order to show their full beauty.

Monreale at Palermo is the best example. Here the eastern apse, vault and all, is of mosaics, and the effect is perfection. The main body of the church, however, has its walls covered by mosaics, but the ceiling and the domes are of wooden construction decorated in a Saracenic manner. This makes the walls appear as though covered with wall paper. The Greek structural sense of the beauty of mosaics is missing.

During the Renaissance, the artists attempted to improve the mosaics in *San Marco* by endeavoring to make them appear as nearly as possible like oil paintings. The result had a decalcomania effect. The artists of those days disliked all things Byzantine. Having discovered perspective in painting, the lack of it in Eastern art annoyed them. Byzantine art was considered artificial.

We see by Gentile Bellini's (1430-1507) picture in the *Accademia*, that the exterior of the church was very beautiful in his day. The three entrance doors appear larger than they now are, the over-doors contained large mosaics and the domes of the roof were gilded.



III.



Vivarini died in 1502. Bellini passed away in 1516, and Carpaccio followed him four years later. These three artists were intellectual painters, and they were followed by the so-called Venetian School: Giorgione, Titian, Palma, Lotto, Bonifazio, Tintoretto, Porde- none, Veronese, Paris Bordone, Catena, Ceriani, and Jacopo Bassano.

Some one has said "Explain the life and the art will explain itself." Venice was on the fringe of the Orient and her life had a strong tinge of things Oriental. Venetian art expressed what the artists saw in Venice, and as they understood the city's life. They created an emotional atmosphere by the use of chiaroscuro. Tintoretto was the greatest exponent of this method.

I believe the foundation of the school originated in

San Marco, for her mosaics have the same color effects as those developed in painting by the Venetian artists. To watch the changing light on the mosaics in *San Marco* fills one with emotion. It was probably in *San Marco* that Tintoretto saw the light of his chiaroscuro that made him the greatest emotional painter that ever lived. Titian at this time was very old, but his studio was still producing many pictures. Tintoretto was forty-two and Veronese but thirty-two years of age, so that El Greco found much to see and to profit by.

The merchants were great patrons of art. The collector of the present day has a commercial instinct, and in general trusts the judgment of an expert. He is interested as a rule in the old, for it requires a different equipment to judge the new. In the days I speak of, a patron of art could order the subject he wished painted from a great living artist, and also have the pleasure of watching him paint the picture.

El Greco enjoyed the latter opportunity also. He probably passed long hours with Schiavone and other artists acquiring information, for he had much to learn. He found no employment, for Byzantine artists were out of fashion. How it came about that he was

eventually, employed by Bassano is not known, but probably he met him at Schiavone's studio, for it is well known that Schiavone, Tintoretto, Veronese, and Bassano were firm friends, and often met there.

Bassano had a great reputation as a painter at that time, and was flooded with orders. Having taken a fancy to El Greco, and needing help, for his sons were still quite young, he engaged him as assistant.

All that we can be sure of in the way of pictures that El Greco painted during those ten years are seven pictures and one portrait. These were evidently painted outside of Bassano's studio. I judge this from the fact that these pictures resemble in no way any work produced or signed by Bassano the artist (Page 74).



IV.



In the Middle Ages, the lady of the castle was highly esteemed, and was guarded and fought for by gallant knights in armor. Her life, however, was very circumscribed, for she lived within the castle with no opportunity to see what went on in the village street, or to obtain a view of the surrounding country. The very air she breathed was within the castle wall.

With the coming of the Renaissance there was a great change in her life. She had more fresh air, more movement, and more company. In fact, all things improved except cleanliness. The classic fondness for water, derived from the Greeks through the Romans, prevailed in the Middle Ages, but gradually died out during the following centuries. It is said that in 1292 there were twenty-six public baths in Paris; under Louis XIV there were but two. Perfumery had taken the place of soap and water.

In the Middle Ages, the lady wore a long-sleeved chemise of fine linen, then a *pelisson* lined with fur, and over these the famous *bliaut*, which hung straight from the shoulders, and had the same apparent diameter at shoulder, waist, and knee. For material she used woolen stuffs or silk of great beauty, and in summer *crêpe de Chine*.

She often could read and write, and as a rule was better educated than her lord and master. A *jongleur* was usually employed at the castle, whose duty it was to read aloud to its assembled occupants.

It was not a gay life, but this all changed with the coming of the Renaissance. The Saracens had finally been disposed of, the land began to blossom



With the coming of the Renaissance, there was a great change in her life. She had more food, air, more movement, and more company. In fact, all things improved except cleanliness. The classic tenderness for women derived from the Greeks through the Romans prevailed in the Middle Ages, and gradually died out during the following centuries. It is said that in 1292 there were twenty-five public baths in Paris; under Louis XIV there were but two. Perfumery had taken the place of soap and water.

In the Middle Ages, the lady wore a long-sleeved chemise of fine linen, then a gossamer linen web over, and over these the famous *stiaun*, which being brought from the shoulders and had the same opposed flange-type at shoulder, waist, and hem. It resembled the modern corset quite a lot, and a woman dressed in it was supposed to resemble a stiaun.

The long, straight and narrow skirt, which I will now leave to the artist, was an extremely simple, straight, and usually unpleated affair, which, unlike the modern skirt, skirted the ground.

It was not a gay life, and this all changed when the coming of the Renaissance. The *stiaun* had mostly been dropped of, the land began to blossom



EL ENTIERRO (FRAGMENT)

once more, and the lady was released from her donjon.

The Italian house with a *loggia* appeared, and the people began to enjoy the open air. This tendency continued until villas developed with beautiful gardens like the Villa Lante and the Villa Aldobrandini.

The chief demand of the lady now was that she should be beautiful, for she had a place in the pageant of life. It was a sumptuous time of beauty in art and in decoration, and the lady had to be in the picture.

The ladies of Venice in the XV and XVI centuries were, if we can believe the pictures painted by the great artists, beautiful, Juno-like women. The type is Palma Vecchio's *Santa Barbara*, Titian's *La Flora* and *La Bella*, the ladies in Veronese's *Venice Crowned by Glory*, and the ladies portrayed in many of the pictures by Tintoretto.

What distinguished them from other Italian women of their day was their bleached golden-red hair. Cesare Vecellio, the cousin of Titian, relates how this transformation was brought about. The shade of hair was called *flo d'oro*. Two pounds of alum, six ounces of black sulphur, and four ounces of honey were diluted with water. With this concoction they anointed their

hair. They then passed the hair through a crownless, broad-brimmed hat, and spread it over the brim, which protected the complexion from the sun. The lady would then sit on the terrace in full sunlight until the hair was quite dry. The result was the so-called Titian red hair.

The ladies wore heavy velvets, silks, and brocades. The waist line had appeared, and the skirts and sleeves were very voluminous. Lace did not become the vogue until the middle of the XVI century, but the ladies wore strings of Oriental pearls. The imitation pearl was not invented until 1680.

The distinguished lady was very learned. She was taught by men, for it was believed that a woman could acquire learning yet was incapable of imparting it to others. The lady learned Latin and Greek as well as music and painting, and was taught how to stimulate conversation without attempting to give information. She was supposed to be graceful in her talk, her laughter, and her play, and to entertain whoever came before her. Her reading was chosen with the view of exciting and refining her sensibility.



The merchants of Venice were public-spirited citizens who governed the Republic, for it was from their number that the Doge, the Council of Ten, and the Senators were selected.

The merchants formed themselves into Guilds, which were pious foundations created for mutual benefit and for purposes of charity. These so-called *Scuole* were divided into six *Scuole Grandi* and numerous *Scuole Minori*. The *Grandi* built beautiful Guild Halls, designed by Bueno, Lombardo, and other architects, and employed Tintoretto and other great artists to decorate them.

The rich merchants were great patrons of art, who built beautiful palaces which were filled with rich hangings and costly works of art, yet with all their power and all their wealth they could not prevent the downfall of Venice.

At the time that interests us, the Republic was suffering from the after effects of a disastrous war. She had been defeated by the Allies at Agnadello (1510), and had lost all her possessions on the mainland, but

the mutual jealousies of the allies had saved her. The League broke up, and the cities of the Veneto returned of their own accord to their allegiance to St. Mark.

Venice never recovered from the blow, coming as it did on top of the unfortunate Turkish wars and the discovery of the Cape route to the East. Although still rich, she had ceased to be a great power. Napoleon was her last enemy, for he destroyed the Republic and handed Venice over to Austria.

